

## Young Adults in the Workplace Initiative

The Young Adults in the Workplace (YIW) initiative is a 5-year Service-to-Science program sponsored by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA). Its purpose is to update and validate model or effective workplace prevention programs for a younger population, ages 16-24 joining our workforce. Statistics from SAMHSA's annual National Survey of Drug Use and Health indicate that large numbers of employees in our workforce are using alcohol and drugs and need assistance with substance abuse problems.

Generation Y (born 1977 – 2002) is a cohort that now includes more than 70 million people and represents the fastest growing segment of today's workforce. In the coming decades, younger workers will comprise an even larger proportion of the overall U.S. workforce. The number of 16-24 year olds in the workforce is projected to increase by 3.4 million by 2010, making the young adult labor force larger than it was in 1980, 1990, or 2000 (Fullerton and Tossi, 2001). This fact, coupled with the well-established fact that substance use prevalence peaks in the adolescent/young adult age range, and has the potential to create important substance use-related challenges for employers. Unfortunately, however, there is currently virtually no empirical evidence that documents the efficacy of workplace-based substance abuse prevention and early intervention programs with young adults. Given the expectancy of a large influx of young adults transitioning into the workplace it is important to determine the best way to address workplace substance abuse prevention and intervention procedures. The cross-site evaluation of this multisite, multiprotocol initiative is designed to broaden the availability of workplace prevention initiatives by generating empirically-based knowledge about a diverse set of interventions and how they function within a variety of workplace populations and contexts.

The need for Young Adult Workplace Prevention is high. We focus more on 16–24 year olds because this is the age group identified as most likely to use illicit drugs. Evidence shows that young adults are not reached through school based programs that workplace programs are not aimed towards them. Data shows that approximately 75% of all illicit drug users in the United States are employed.

CSAP initially funded thirteen grantees in Phase I, the design, of the YIW initiative. Six grantees have been funded to continue on to Phase II implementation and evaluation of a YIW program. Additionally, there is a YIW cross-site evaluation for the program which should provide a comprehensive picture of the success of the YIW interventions, overall effects they have on employees, and the value they provide to employers. The cross-site infrastructure supports three interrelated evaluation efforts: a process evaluation, an outcome evaluation, and an economic evaluation.

The YIW program plans to assist other workplaces across the country in adapting and implementing similar programs in their own settings by providing future National Registry of Effective Programs and Practices (NREPP) and making available to the public replication manuals, successful products and materials for those workplaces wishing to have their own YIW program. With 2 years remaining in the 5 year program, the collaborative has examined workplace response to substance abuse among youthful employees and studied emerging issues in order to develop policies related to the future needs of workplaces. In addition to being the first to establish an empirical database documenting employers experience with substance abuse programs and policies aimed at young adults in the workplace.

